

## P O L K B R O S F O U N D A T I O N

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Former Foundation Intern to Oversee Grantmaking**

*The Polk Bros. Foundation promotes Evette Cardona to V.P. of Programs*

**CHICAGO** – Evette Cardona first joined the Polk Bros. Foundation in 1997 to learn about grantmaking during her eight-month internship. She then planned to pursue a career in social work.

Little did she know that she would get the opportunity to stay and play a vital role in guiding the foundation's giving to hundreds of local nonprofit organizations.

Since it was founded in 1988, the Polk Bros. Foundation has given more than \$300 million to Chicago's nonprofit community through approximately 6,000 grants. These organizations work to provide access to quality education, preventive health care and basic human services for all Chicagoans, as well as to strengthen the city's diverse arts community.

Cardona started her new position as Vice President of Programs Sept. 1. In her new role, she will oversee all day-to-day grantmaking, make recommendations to the board of directors and develop strategies for the foundation's grantmaking focus.

Cardona's promotion from Senior Program Officer comes at a time of transition for the foundation, as CEO Sandra P. Guthman and Executive Director Nikki Will Stein will both retire at the end of the year.

"My colleagues at the foundation and I are delighted to announce Evette's promotion," said Stein. "She is a natural leader and brings a depth of experience to the job."

As a native Chicagoan, Cardona was familiar with the Polk family stores and saw the internship as a great opportunity to advance her education as a master's candidate in the University of Chicago's School of Social Service Administration.

Though she initially intended to become a social worker, Cardona found herself drawn to the funding side of the nonprofit world. And, as 40 percent of the foundation's funds go to social service organizations, her knowledge of the field proved invaluable.

“It has been a privilege to work at a foundation and to see money given to programs that make a real difference in the community,” said Cardona.

Cardona has carved out a name for herself as champion for causes and underserved communities in Chicago. In 1995, Cardona co-founded Amigas Latinas, a nonprofit organization empowering Latina LGBTQ Women in Chicago.

“Evette has both the head and heart that is necessary in our work,” said Rosa Ortiz, an Amigas Latinas scholarship recipient, who later became board president. “She is able to step-back and reflect about what’s next, deal with difficult issues hands-on and, in the midst of the challenges, remind you why this work matters.”

Cardona also is a board member and secretary of the Donors Forum, an association of grantmakers, nonprofits and advisors, a member of the Chicago Foundation for Women’s Lesbian Leadership Council and an advisory board member of the Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in Arts and Media at Columbia College. She also teaches philanthropy and public policy to social work students at her alma mater. In 2008, she won the University of Chicago’s Elizabeth Butler award for outstanding professional success and achievement in social work. She received the U of C’s Leadership in Diversity Alumni award in 2010.

As she begins her new role, Cardona is looking forward to what is in store for the Polk Bros. Foundation and to working with the staff to launch new initiatives that build on the foundation’s legacy.

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### **About Polk Bros. Foundation**

*The Polk Bros. Foundation was established by members of the Polk family who owned and operated the Polk Bros. chain of retail appliance and furniture stores. The Polk Bros. Foundation today supports organizations that provide direct services to Chicago communities of need. Grants, made for social services, education, cultural programs and health care, fund programs that have a measurable impact on underserved children, youth and families. The Foundation's assets have grown to more than \$400 million, with more than \$20 million in grants distributed each year. A dedicated seven-person board and staff of eleven partner with grantees in seeking solutions to the most pressing issues faced by Chicago families.*